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C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 000529

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2017  
TAGS: [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [GV](#)  
SUBJECT: SITREP NO. 3: MILITARY UNREST, MAY 14, 1030 HOURS  
GMT

REF: CONAKRY 527 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Jackson McDonald. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On the surface, Conakry appears normal this morning, May 14, despite serious, unresolved problems within the military. Traffic is flowing. Schools, shops, and offices are open.

¶2. (C) The status of the military remains fluid, within both the ranks and the senior command.

¶3. (C) Disgruntled soldiers, who have been airing their grievances over the past two weeks, do not speak with one voice and have no defined leadership within their ranks. They still expect President Lansana Conte to come to Camp Alpha Yaya today to address them. He has already stood them up twice. Moreover, many soldiers appear unhappy with the change in the military command, which falls short of their demand for new leadership. They are especially unhappy with the appointment of retired General Bailo Diallo as Minister of Defense, because of his advanced age and track record of corruption. He does not represent change but, rather, more of the same. In addition, the soldiers are still demanding increased pay and payment of salary arrears, which the government cannot afford.

¶4. (C) As of this writing, there has been no official turnover within the military command. General Kerfalla Camara remains Chief of Defense Staff; General Arafan Camara remains Minister of Defense. No turnover ceremony has been scheduled.

¶5. (C) According to President Conte's senior military aide at the Presidency, General Kerfalla, General Arafan, and other senior military officials learned of their dismissal when the presidential decree was read on national radio about 1000 hours, May 12. They had not been informed ahead of time. The same source claimed that the decree was hastily drafted on the morning of May 14, when President Conte dropped by the house of his third wife (the fortune-teller). We have no independent confirmation of this, but the third spouse has exerted influence -- often nefarious and self-interested -- on presidential nominations in the past. Colonel Emmanuel Konate, Secretary General of the Defense Staff, who normally drafts all decrees relating to the military, claims no involvement in this one.

¶6. (C) President Conte's senior military aide claimed that Conte asked three times on Saturday afternoon and again on Sunday where Generals Kerfalla and Arafan were and why they had not come to see him. Conte's staff reportedly had to remind him that he had fired them. If this is true (we have no independent confirmation), then President Conte's is still suffering from short-term memory loss and remains subject to manipulation.

¶7. (C) On the night of May 14-15, soldiers and civilians looted warehouses in the Matam district, reportedly stealing 7000 tons of rice, 400 motorcycles, 20 4x4 vehicles, and 20,000 cartons of soap. Although several warehouses were looted, the main one belongs to Alpha Amadou Diallo, a major Peuhl merchant closely associated with President Conte. His warehouses were also attacked during the February 1996 mutiny.

¶8. (C) On the night of May 15, several truckloads of Chinese-trained army commandos arrived at Camp Alpha Yaya (presumably from their base in Kinda) and then departed towards downtown. It remains unclear whether they are part of the patrols that the government has just announced to prevent renewed looting.

¶9. (C) The U.S. Mission is fully staffed and functioning normally. All Amcits are safe for now. We are continuing to monitor the situation very closely. It remains uncertain whether Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate will be available to receive the Ambassador this morning as scheduled.  
MCDONALD